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THE
DOCTRINE OF ST. JOHN,
AND THE
FAITH OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS,
NOT UNITARIAN.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

AT ST. PETER'S

ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1791.

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AND ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S PREACHERS AT WHITEHALL.

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M D C C X C I.

IMPRIMATUR,

JOHAN. COOKE,

Vice-Can. Oxon.

C. C. C.

Mar. 21. 1791.

TO THE
RIGHT REVEREND
B E I L B Y
LORD BISHOP OF LONDON,

MY LORD,

THE very honourable and unsolicited appointment, which your Lordship was lately pleased to confer upon me, encourages me to request the sanction of your name to the following discourse.

Your Lordship's well-known zeal for the cause of Christianity will induce you to receive with candour this attempt to illustrate and defend one of its distinguishing doctrines.

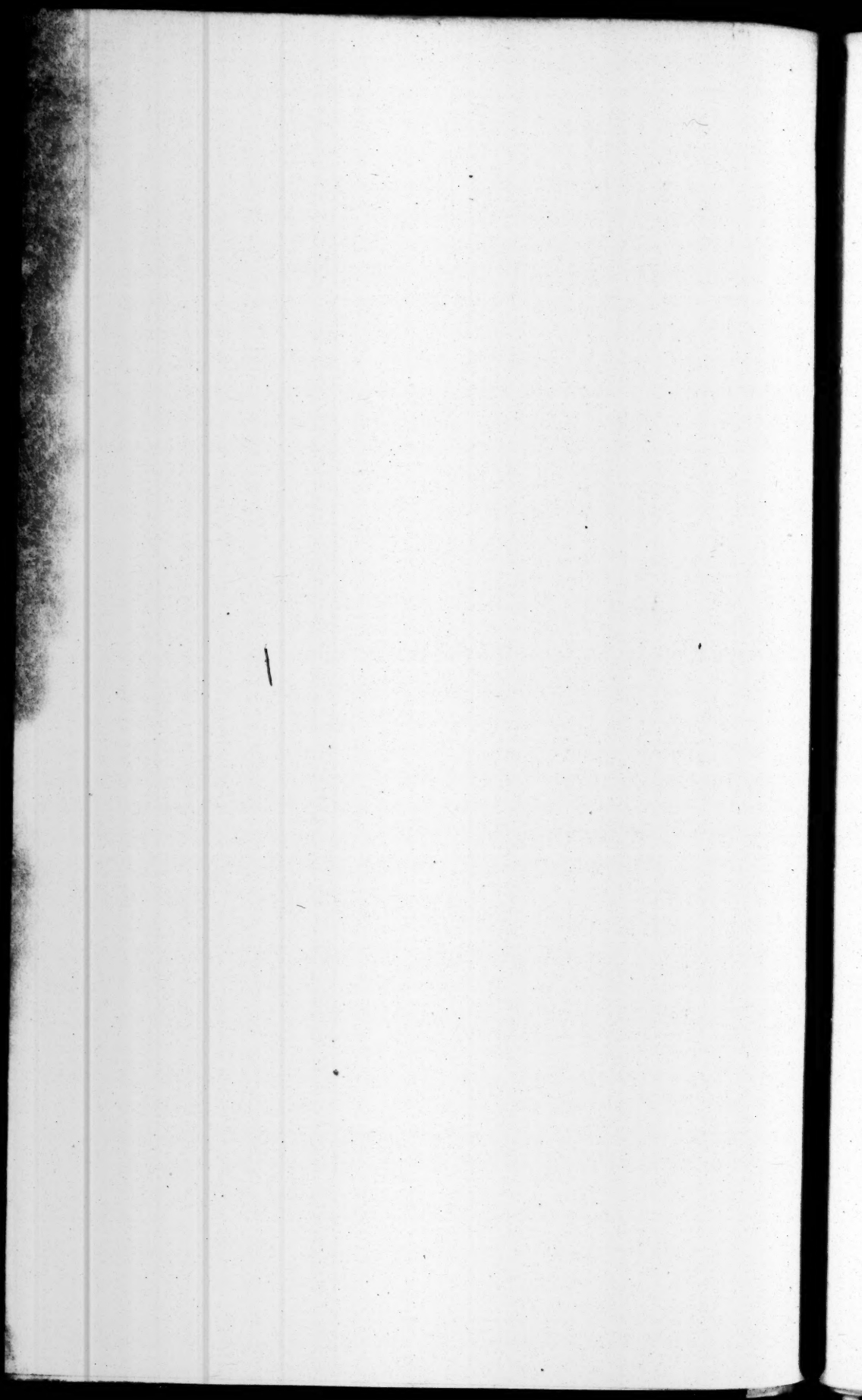
I am, MY LORD,

with the greatest respect,

Your Lordship's most grateful

and obedient humble Servant,

DANIEL VEYSIE.



JOHN I. 14.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

THERE is no declaration of holy Scripture, to the truth of which the Christian Church hath borne more ample testimony, than this of St. Paul, "There must be heresies among you^a." Even in the apostolical age, when, if ever, we might expect Believers to be of one heart and of one mind, the divisions, which prevailed, were neither few nor unimportant. And in the subsequent ages, when recourse could no longer be had to apostolical authority for the determination of controverted points, these divisions most astonishingly increased; and the annals of the Church are full of the pernicious and antichristian doctrines, which from time to time were propagated and maintained; till at

^a 1 Cor. xi. 19.

length the name of Christian, became, not so much the appropriate name of a body of men, all the disciples of one common master, and all professing one common faith, as the appellation of a multitude of sects and factions, differing from each other in the most essential points, and frequently agreeing hardly in any thing, except that common name by which they were called.

Nor is unanimity more the characteristic of the present, than of any preceding age. On the contrary, the peace of the Church has seldom been interrupted by more pernicious heresies, than those, which at present prevail. Opinions more wild and fantastical may perhaps have been maintained in former times: but never at any period have errors been propagated more opposite to genuine Christianity, or more degrading to the dignity of its divine author. I allude to the doctrines which are commonly known by the name of *unitarian*; the propagators and supporters of which seem to have in view the utter subversion of almost every thing, which we have learned to esteem essential to our religion. What we venerate as sacred truths, they reject as shocking abuses; what we account the most fundamental articles of our christian faith, they scruple not to call its greatest corruptions; corruptions, which, say they, “ have
 “ debased the spirit of Christianity, and have al-
 “ most annihilated all the happy effects which

“it was eminently calculated to produce^b.” And in particular they declare themselves irreconcilable enemies to the great doctrines of the divinity and pre-existence of Christ; affirming that the Saviour of the world, whom we consider as the proper son of God, of the same divine nature with the Father, with whom he existed in glory before the foundation of the world, and by whose almighty power he was miraculously born of a pure virgin without the intervention of a human father—affirming that this our divine Saviour is simply a Man; of a nature not superior to our own; having had no existence in any manner or respect before his coming into the world; and when he came into the world, being produced in no extraordinary way; in a word, being a Man in the most proper sense of the expression, a Man, born of Men^c.

^b Preface to Dr. Priestley's History of the Corruptions of Christianity, pag. 11.

^c “The miraculous conception is,” says Mr. Gibbon, (Hist. of the decline and fall of the Roman empire, vol. 4. pag. 535. note 4.) “one of the last Articles which Dr. Priestley has curtailed from his scanty Creed.” It is however but fair to observe, that Dr. P. does not profess himself decidedly against the doctrine; he pretends merely to have collected materials for forming a right judgement in the case. Nevertheless it is very evident to which side he leans. “I would observe,” says he, (Hist. of early Opinions, vol. 4. p. 6.) “that though at present there are but few who disbelieve the miraculous conception, there have always, I believe, been some, and those Men of learning and character among Christians, who have thought as

And for these opinions they plead the highest antiquity, maintaining that no other doctrine was taught by the Apostles, or believed by the first Christians^d; consequently that the belief of

“ *I am now inclined to do with respect to it—To my certain know-*
 “ ledge the number of such persons is increasing, and several of
 “ them think it to be a matter of great consequence, that a doc-
 “ trine, which they regard as a discredit to the Christian scheme,
 “ should be exploded.” And again, pag. 50. “ I think it is
 “ hardly possible to read these passages” (*quotations from several*
 “ *of the Fathers*) “ in which the inconveniences that would have at-
 “ tended the discovery of the miraculous conception are very
 “ strongly and naturally described, without feeling that the story
 “ itself is *an incumbrance on the Christian scheme*, and that it would
 “ at least have appeared to more advantage without it.” Whether
 the miraculous conception be an incumbrance on the *Christian*
 scheme, is another question: it is certainly a great incumbrance
 on the scheme of our modern Unitarians. For if, as they affirm,
 Christ was a mere Man, naturally possessed of no other powers
 than other men have, what reason can possibly be assigned, why
 he should not have been conceived and born like other men? On
 the other hand, if we admit the doctrine in question, and allow
 that Christ was miraculously conceived, and born in an unusual
 manner, who is there, whom this circumstance does not lead to
 suspect, I had almost said, does not persuade, that his nature must
 be superior to that of Man? It is not therefore without reason,
 that the advocates of the simple humanity endeavour to remove
 from the Christian creed a doctrine so hostile to their principal po-
 sition. In the mean while the orthodox Believer is not displeased
 to find, that this bold measure is attempted by means, not likely
 to make many Converts; viz. partly by asserting the fallibility
 of the holy Evangelists, who relate the fact; and partly by de-
 nyng the authenticity of the writings, which contain the relation.

“ “ That the antient Jewish Church must have held the opi-
 “ nion that Christ was simply a Man,—may be concluded from
 “ its being *the clear doctrine of the Scripture, and from the Apostles*
 “ *having taught no other.*” Hist. of Cor. vol. 1. p. 6.

“ Dr.

these latter ages, however dignified with the title of *orthodoxy*, is in reality a departure from the purity and simplicity of the true Christian faith, which can no otherwise be restored than by the adoption of those doctrines which they hold, and against which we so earnestly contend.

To these bold pretensions to high antiquity and apostolical authority, I shall, in the following discourse, oppose an argument, deduced from the general intention of St. John in writing his gospel, and particularly from the method pursued, and the expressions adopted by him in the introductory part, from which the text is taken.

The antient Fathers, who have had occasion to mention this subject, almost unanimously assert that the gospel of St. John was principally written in opposition to the Gnostic heresy, and particularly that branch of it, of which Cerin-

" Dr. Horsley's charge to his clergy has afforded me another
 " opportunity of re-examining the subject, and the result, which
 " is now before the reader, has been, as I think, a further illus-
 " tration and a stronger confirmation of my original position, *viz.*
 " that the belief that Christ was a mere Man, naturally possessed
 " of no other powers than other men have, but a distinguished
 " messenger of God, and the chief instrument in his hands for
 " the good of Men, *was the original faith of the Christian Church.*"
 Preface to Letters to Dr. Horsley, Part 1. pag. 2.

" It must, I think, have been evident, from the considera-
 " tions suggested in the preceding introduction, that the doctrines
 " of the divinity and pre-existence of Christ, *were not taught in*
 " *the Scriptures.*" Hist. of early Opinions, vol. 1. pag. 91.

thus

thus was the founder^c. Indeed this opinion appears so probable in itself, and is supported by authorities so incontrovertible, that it is adopted by the great Champion of modern Unitarianism^f; and therefore on the present occasion may safely be admitted without further investigation.

With respect to the heresy itself, we know in general that it owes its origin to a species of Philosophy, which about the time of our Saviour's appearance was very prevalent in the East, and has from thence obtained the name of *Oriental*. Among the followers of this Philosophy, many in the early ages became converts to Christianity. Impelled by the force of truth, they embraced indeed the Christian faith; but unhappily brought with them into the Church a prejudice in favour of the philosophical sentiments of their sect, into a conformity with which they endeavoured to torture the doctrines

^c Irenæus adv. Hæc. lib. 3. cap. 11. p. 218. Grabe's edit.—Jerom in Matthæum Proœmium.—Another reason, assigned by the Antients for the writing of this gospel, is, that St. John might have an opportunity of relating many circumstances respecting Christ, which are omitted by the other Evangelists; particularly his acts before the Baptist was shut up in prison. See Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. 3. cap. 24. These two reasons are by no means inconsistent with each other.

^f Hist. of Cor. vol. 1. pag. 11.—Hist. of early Opin. vol. 1. pag. 181.—It should not however be concealed that the candid and judicious Lardner is of another opinion. I have taken some notice of his principal arguments in Note m. pag. 16.

of their new profession. Accordingly they framed a theological system, chimerical and extravagant in the extreme ; a system, full of the wildest fictions and most intricate subtilties, that a fanciful and inventive imagination could suggest.

But not to enter too minutely into an investigation of this system, I shall principally confine myself to those tenets of these antient heretics with which at present we are more particularly concerned ; and these are, the opinions which they advanced concerning the creation of the world, the nature and end of the Jewish dispensation, and the person of our blessed Saviour.

Among the doctrines of the oriental philosophy (which, as I before observed, was the parent of the Gnostic heresy) there is one, which ascribes the formation of the universe, not to the supreme God, but to an agent, greatly inferior in the spirituality and purity of his nature. The principle, upon which they founded this strange doctrine, was the gross corruption and the many irregularities, which they saw, or thought they saw, in the present constitution of things. For they argued that a material world, abounding, as our's confessedly does, with evil both natural and moral, could not be the work of a spiritual and all-perfect Being. In order therefore to account for the origin of evil, they supposed that the supreme God, to whom they ascribed all possible perfection, and who had dwelt from all eternity in

in the fulness of light and bliss, was not the immediate author of either the visible or the invisible world, but produced them both by means of emanations from himself, to which they gave the name of *Æons*. And because in the production of things there are apparently required two kinds of powers, the one to serve as Agents, the other as Patients, or recipients of the action of the former, in analogy to this, they held that the supreme God originally produced from himself two *Æons*, the one male, the other female; that from the union of these *Æons* another pair was produced; and from these last, another; and so on, in a regular order and succession, 'till at length the *Pleroma*, (for so they called the habitation of the supreme God) was filled with a family of *Æons*, all bearing a resemblance to their great original, but not all possessing equal degrees of perfection. For they conceived that an emanation cannot in its own nature be so perfect as the source, from whence it flowed: consequently in a series of emanations, each gradation will be less perfect than the preceding one; so that the further the emanation is removed from the original source, the weaker and more impure will its nature be. Upon this principle they accounted for the natural and moral evil, with which this lower world abounds. They supposed that the visible world was created by an *Æon*, removed,

as to his origin, to a great distance from the supreme Being, and consequently partaking but little of the purity and spirituality of his nature; that therefore the world, which he created, was necessarily impure and material; not indeed altogether destitute of a resemblance to the first great Cause, but filled at the same time with a variety of evils, the inevitable consequence of successive emanation, which, according to their hypothesis, infinite goodness itself was not able to prevent^a.

From this Philosophy the distinguishing tenets of the Gnostic heretics are evidently borrowed. Like their parent sect, they ascribed the creation of the visible world, not to the supreme God, but to a power so greatly inferior, as even to be excluded from the *Pleroma*; by which name they likewise distinguished the invisible state. They had also their *Æons*, whom they derived primarily and originally from the supreme God, and then the one from the other, in what St. Paul, alluding to this very circumstance, justly calls, "endless genealogies^b." With

^a See Brucker, Hist. Crit. Philos. Tom. 2. pag. 639. where the Reader will find a copious account of the origin and doctrines of the oriental Philosophy, together with proofs that the Gnostic heresy was derived from it, and not, as many writers have supposed, from the opinions of Plato and the Greek Philosophy.

^b 1 Tim. i. 4.—Mention is again made of these genealogies, Tit. iii. 9. and there is probably a reference to them in other passages, particularly 1 Tim. iv. 7. Ibid. vi. 20. 2 Tim. ii. 16.

the supreme Father, to whom they gave the name of *Βυθος* or *Profundity*, they combined the female *Εννοια* or *Thought*, whom they also called *Σιγη* and *Χαρις*, *Silence* and *Grace*. Of the *Æons*, who proceeded from this original pair, the first and principal was *Νους* or *Mind*, whom they also called *Μονογενης* or *the Only-begotten*: the female *Æon* combined with *Μονογενης*, was *Αληθεια* or *Truth*. To the offspring of this last pair they gave the name of *Λογος* or *the Word*, whose female partner was *Ζωη* or *Life*¹.

¹ After this manner are the male and female *Æons* generated and deduced in the Valentinian system, as described by Irenæus, lib. 1. cap. 1. The genealogy is there extended to a much greater length, but enough is here extracted for the present argument.

Though this combination of *Æons* first appears in the Valentinian system, yet we are not to imagine that Valentinus was the first, who thus combined them; for Irenæus himself testifies (lib. 1. c. 5. p. 49.) that Valentinus did not invent the system, which goes by his name; but merely reduced into his own peculiar form the principles of the elder Gnostics. His words are these; ὁ μὲν γὰρ πρῶτος, ἀπο τῆς λεγομένης Γνωστικῆς αἵρεσως τὰς ἀρχὰς εἰς ἴδιον χαρακτῆρα διδασκαλεῖν μεθαρμύσας Οὐαλεντίνος, οὕτως ἐξηγορήσεν· from whence it appears, that he found the materials of his heresy already collected, and had nothing to do but to work them up in the manner most agreeable to himself. Accordingly Irenæus (lib. 2. c. 18. p. 138.) having shewn the absurdity of the Valentinian notion, that *Nus* and *Alithia* proceeded from *Bythus* and *Ennoia*, adds; “Hæc autem, quæ dicta sunt de sensus emissionem, similiter et ad-
“versus eos, qui a Basilide sunt, aptata sunt.” This procession was therefore common to Basilides and Valentinus; nor was Basilides the author of it; for Irenæus immediately adds, “et ad-
“versus reliquos Gnosticos, a quibus et hi initia emissionum accipientes, convicti sunt in primo libro.”

With respect to the Jewish dispensation, it was the opinion of some among them, that the

From this same chapter it may also be shewn, that the pair of Æons deduced from *Nus* and *Alethia*, viz. *Logos* and *Zoe*, is not peculiar to the Valentinian system. It should be premised, that according to Valentinus, the Æons, next in succession to *Logos* and *Zoe*, are *Homo* and *Ecclesia*. Now Irenæus asserts, that in this respect Valentinus had changed the order of the ancient Gnostics, who placed *Homo* and *Ecclesia* before *Logos* and *Zoe*, and accuses them of making this change improperly. “De ea autem quæ est ex his secunda emissione Hominis et Ecclesiæ, ipsi patres eorum falso cognominati Gnostici, impugnant adversus invicem, sua propria vindicantes, et malos fures semetipsos convincentes, aptabile esse magis emissioni dicentes, uti verisimile, ex *Homine Verbum*, sed non ex *Verbo Hominem* emissum.” See Massuet’s præviæ Dissertationes in lib. Iren. pag. xx.

Indeed we perceive the foundation of the Valentinian system in the blasphemies of that Father of all Heretics, as Irenæus calls him, Simon Magus; who, as we read (Acts viii. 9.) gave out that he was *some great one*, and prevailed upon the people to believe, that he was *the great power of God*, i. e. according to the explanation of Irenæus (lib. i. c. 20. p. 94.) that he was the supreme Father himself. “Hic igitur a multis quasi Deus glorificatus est, et docuit — esse se sublimissimam virtutem, hoc est, eum qui sit super omnia pater.” He further asserted (ibid.) that a Woman called Helena, with whom he consorted, was *Ennoia*, or the first conception of his mind. “Simon autem Samaritanus, ex quo universæ hæreses substiterunt, habet hujusmodi sectæ materiam. Hic Helenam quandam, quam ipse a Tyro civitate Phœnices quæstuariam cum redemisset, secum circumducebat, dicens hanc esse primam mentis ejus conceptionem, matrem omnium, per quam in initio mente concepit Angelos facere et Archangelos. Hanc enim Ennoiam exilientem ex eo, cognoscentem quæ vult pater ejus, degredi ad inferiora, et generare Angelos et potestates, a quibus et mundum hunc factum dixit.” Upon the whole we may without hesitation affirm that the part of the Valentinian

author of it was, not the supreme God, but that same Being to whom they ascribed the creation of the world; who, moved by the malignity of his nature, imposed upon the Israelites a severe law, and a multitude of oppressive and vexatious rites. And when he still further aimed at universal sovereignty, it pleased the supreme Being to take measures for counteracting such ambitious projects; and for this purpose he sent into the world one of the blessed inhabitants of the invisible state, whom he commissioned to destroy the empire of this rigorous tyrant, to deliver men from the bondage of his oppressive

system here referred to, existed, either in this very form, or in some other very nearly resembling it, in the days of the Apostles.

Dr. Priestley appears to have given an inaccurate statement of the Valentinian genealogy. He says (Hist. of early Opin. vol. i. p. 179.) "with respect to the super-angelic nature of Christ, Valentinus held that he was one of the *Æons*; and according to his genealogies, both *Christ* and the *Holy Spirit*, were the offspring of *Monogenes*, which came from *Logos* and *Zoe*, as these were the offspring of *Nous* and *Veritas*, and these of *Bythus* and *Sige*." According to this account, *Monogenes*, from which *Christ* and the *Holy Spirit* were descended, was the offspring of *Logos* and *Zoe*; whereas upon referring to the authority cited by Dr. P. himself (Iren. lib. i. cap. i.) it will be found that the reverse was the case, and that *Logos* and *Zoe* were the offspring of *Monogenes*, who was the same with *Nous*, the immediate offspring of the supreme Father. I do not mean to lay any great stress upon this error, because the genealogies themselves being idle and vain, a mistake concerning them, not affecting (as is the case at present) the main argument, cannot be of any great importance.

laws,

laws, and to reveal the supreme Father, of whom 'till then the world had been in ignorance^k.

^k The notion, that the supreme God was not the author of the Jewish dispensation, seems the necessary consequence of his not being the Creator of the world. They, who held the latter of these opinions, might justly argue, that a pure and perfect Being could not deign to concern himself at all with the affairs of a world, the creation of which was so repugnant to his nature; much less could he be the dispenser of a Law, which proclaims the severity of an unrelenting Judge, rather than the mildness of a protecting Benefactor. Accordingly we find that all the early Heretics — Basilides, Saturninus, Simon Magus — ascribed the giving of the law, and the inspiration of the Prophets to those inferior Beings, by whom, according to them, the world was created.

The opinions of Basilides upon this head are thus described by Irenæus (lib. i. c. 23. p. 97.) “Eos autem, qui posterius continebant cælum angelos, quod etiam a nobis videtur, constituisse ea quæ sunt in mundo omnia, et partes sibi fecisse terræ, et earum quæ super eam sunt gentium. Esse autem principem ipsorum eum, qui Judæorum putatur esse Deus. Et quoniam hic suis hominibus, id est, Judæis, voluit subicere reliquas gentes, reliquos omnes principes contra stetisse ei et contra egisse. Quapropter et reliquæ restiterunt gentes ejus genti. Innatum autem et innominatum patrem, videntem perditionem ipsorum, misisse primogenitum *Nun* suum, (et hunc esse qui dicitur Christus) in libertatem credentium ei a potestate eorum, qui mundum fabricaverunt.”

In the preceding chapter, Irenæus ascribes to Saturninus sentiments not very dissimilar. “Et Judæorum Deum unum ex angelis esse dixit, et propter hoc quod dissolvere voluerint patrem ejus omnes principes, (*we should read, voluerit pater ejus, i.e. Christi, see Grabe's note on the passage*) advenisse Christum ad destructionem Judæorum Dei, et ad salutem credentium ei.”

Simon Magus, who, as I before observed after Irenæus, lib. i. c. 20. gave out that he was the supreme Father himself, asserted that one end of his coming into the world was, “uti hominibus salutem præstaret per suam agnitionem. Cum enim male morerentur

Concerning the person of him, who was thus sent for the deliverance and instruction of mankind, various opinions were advanced, all of them extravagant, and no less abhorrent from the true Christian doctrine, than the fictions already mentioned. It was asserted by some that the body, which the Saviour assumed in order to his manifestation, was one in semblance only and not in reality; and that his birth and passion were both imaginary: for being a man only in appearance, they held that he could not with propriety be said to be born, nor was he capable of suffering that pain and death to which real flesh and blood are subject¹.

“derarentur angeli mundum, quoniam unusquisque eorum concupisceret principatum, ad emendationem venisse rerum et descendi eum transfiguratum, et assimilatum virtutibus, et potestatibus, et angelis, ut et in hominibus homo appareret ipse, cum non esset homo; et passum autem in Judæa putatum, cum non esset passus. Prophetas autem a mundi fabricatoribus angelis inspiratos dixisse prophetias.”

The same opinion respecting the Jewish dispensation is ascribed to Cerinthus by the author of the appendix to Tertullian de præscriptione Hæreticorum. 48. “Post hunc Cerinthus hæreticus erupit, similia docens. Nam et ipse mundum institutum esse ab illis (*angelis et virtutibus*) dicit. Christum ex semine Joseph natum proponit; hominem illum tantummodo sine divinitate contendens, ipsam quoque legem ab angelis datam perhibens: “Judæorum Deum, non Dominum sed angelum promens.”

¹ The opinion, that Christ had no real body, is manifestly alluded to in the following passages of Scripture. 1 John i. 1. That, which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the word of life—declare we unto you.—

1 John

Others, among whom was Cerinthus himself, not venturing to deny the reality of his body, affirmed that he consisted of two distinct natures, one of which they called *Jesus*, the other *Christ*. They held that *Jesus* was truly and properly a Man, not born of a Virgin, (for such a birth appeared to them a thing in itself impossible) but the Son of Joseph and Mary, born as other Men are, only excelling all others in justice, wisdom, and prudence. With respect to *Christ*, they held that he was a celestial *Æon*, who descended from the Pleroma, and when *Jesus* was baptized, entered into him in the shape of a Dove, enabling him to work miracles, and revealing to him, and through him to the rest of mankind, the unknown Father. They moreover affirmed, that at the crucifixion *Christ* retired from *Jesus*, and returned to the

1 John iv. 2. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is *come in the flesh*, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.—2 John 7. Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is *come in the flesh*.

Ignatius, who was contemporary with the Apostles, in his Epistle to the Smyrneans, §. 2. makes express mention of some, who held this opinion. Ταῦτα γὰρ πάντα ἐπαδὲν δι' ἡμᾶς, ἵνα σωθῶμεν. Καὶ ἀληθῶς ἐπαδὲν, ὡς καὶ ἀληθῶς ἀνέσχεν ἑαυτὸν οὐχ ὥσπερ ἀπὸ τοῦ τινος λεγούσι, το δοκεῖ αὐτὸν πεποιθέναι, αὐτοὶ το δοκεῖν οὐκ ἀλλ' ὡς φρονούσιν καὶ συνέχουσιν αὐτοῖς, οὗτοι ἀσώματοι καὶ δαιμονικοί.

It is almost needless to remark, that these Heretics, affirming that Christ suffered in appearance only, κατὰ τὸ δοκεῖν, were from hence called Δοκῆται, Docetæ.

Pleroma;

Pleroma; that the *Man* Jesus alone died, and rose from the dead, the *Æon* Christ, being spiritual, and therefore incapable of suffering^m.

^m “ Et Cerinthus autem quidam in Asia, non a primo Deo factum esse mundum docuit, sed a virtute quadam valde separato, et distante ab ea principalitate quæ est super universa, et ignorante eum qui est super omnia Deum. Jesum autem subiecit, non ex virgine natum, (impossibile enim hoc ei visum est) fuisse autem eum Joseph et Mariæ filium, similiter ut reliqui omnes homines, et plus potuisse justitia, et prudentia, et sapientia ab omnibus. Et post baptismum descendisse in eum, ab ea principalitate quæ est super omnia, Christum figura columbæ, et tunc annunciasse incognitum patrem, et virtutes perfecisse; in fine autem revolasse iterum Christum de Jesu, et Jesum passum esse, et resurrexisse: Christum autem impassibilem perseverasse, existentem spiritalem.” *Iren. lib. 1. c. 25. p. 102.*

St. John seems to refer to this heresy when he declares (chap. xx. 30, 31.) that the end of his writing his gospel was to establish the opposite faith. “ And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but *these are written* that ye might believe that Jesus is the *Christ, the Son of God.*” Similar expressions occur also in his first Epistle. Chap. ii. 22. Who is a liar, but he that denieth that *Jesus is the Christ?*—Ch. iv. 15. Whosoever shall confess that *Jesus is the Son of God*, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.—Ch. v. 1. Whosoever believeth that *Jesus is the Christ*, is born of God.

This application of these expressions of St. John to the Cerinthian heresy was made by Irenæus. “ Non ergo alterum filium hominis novit Evangelium, nisi hunc qui ex Maria, qui et passus est: sed neque Christum avolantem ante passionem ab Jesu: sed hunc qui natus est, Jesum Christum novit Dei filium, et eundem hunc passum resurrexisse, quemadmodum Joannes Dominum discipulus confirmat, dicens: *Hæc autem scripta sunt, ut credatis quoniam Jesus est Christus filius Dei, et ut credentes vitam æternam habeatis in nomine ejus*; PROVIDENS has blasphemias regulas quæ dividunt Dominum, quantum ex ipsis at-

“ tinet.

Those, who thus distinguished between *Jesus* and *Christ*, however, as Irenæus justly observes, they

"tinet, ex altera et altera substantia dicentes eum factum. Prop-
 "ter quod et in epistola sua sic testificatus est nobis: *Filii, no-*
 "vissima hora est, et quemadmodum audistis quoniam *Antichristus*
 "venit, nunc *Antichristi* multi facti sunt: unde cognoscimus que-
 "niam novissima hora est. Ex nobis exierunt, sed non erant ex no-
 "bis: si enim fuissent ex nobis, permansissent utique nobiscum: sed
 "ut manifestarentur quoniam non sunt ex nobis. Cognoscitis ergo quo-
 "niam omne mendacium extraneum est, et non est de veritate. Quis
 "est mendax, nisi qui negat quoniam *Jesus non est Christus*? Hic est
 "*Antichristus*." Lib. 3. c. 18. p. 241.

Note; instead of *providens* in the above passage, Grabe pro-
 poses to read *prævidens*; and this undoubtedly is the word which
 the translator of Irenæus ought to have employed. I cannot resist
 this opportunity of lamenting, that we have by far the greater
 part of the works of this able and eloquent defender of the or-
 thodox faith only through the medium of a barbarous Latin
 translation.

This passage of Irenæus has been adduced to prove, that St.
 John's gospel was not written with a design to confute the Cerin-
 thian heresy. For it is argued, that Irenæus here asserts, that the
 Apostle wrote, not because doctrines, opposite to those which he
 himself maintained, then actually prevailed, but because he fore-
 saw that they would prevail. From whence it is inferred that this
 gospel was prior to the rise of the Cerinthian heresy, and conse-
 quently could not have been written to confute it.--See Lard-
 ner's Supplement to the Credibility of the Gospel Hist. vol. 1.
 p. 433.

But I do not think that Irenæus intended to say what is here
 ascribed to him. For *First*, This interpretation of his words
 makes him contradict himself. For he had before expressly as-
 serted, that St. John wrote his gospel with a view of exploding
 that error, which had been *previously* propagated by Cerinthus:
 "volens per evangelii annuntiationem auferre eum, qui a Cerin-
 "tho *inseminatus erat hominibus, errorem*." Lib. 3. c. 11. p. 218.

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Secondly,

might pretend in words to confess the Lord as *one*, did in reality divide him: for they held,

Secondly, The passage itself will admit of another, and, in my judgement, of a better interpretation. It should be remembered that the Heretics do not seem to have been aware of the extent, to which their own doctrines might be carried. They intended to confess the Lord as *one*, and not to make that division, of which Irenæus complains; and accordingly he accuses them of expressing themselves contrary to their real sentiments. For after the passage in question, as quoted above, it immediately follows: "*omnes qui prædicti sunt, etsi lingua quidem consentient unum*" "*Jesus Christum, semetipsos derident, aliud quidem sentientes,*" "*aliud vero dicentes.*" From whence I argue, that the words, *providens has blasphemias regulas quæ dividunt Dominum*, refer, not by way of anticipation to doctrines which would in future be propagated, but to the consequences of doctrines already prevailing: the Apostle foresaw, that although the Heretics might intend no such thing, yet from their doctrines articles of belief might and would be drawn, destructive of that unity of person in Christ, which the Catholick faith obliges us to confess.

What has been premised will furnish us with an answer to an objection urged by Dr. Hardner (Suppl. to the Cred. of the Gospel Hist. vol. 1. p. 255) against the opinion that the introduction to this gospel was written to confute Heretics. "I say," he, "nothing of this kind in the rest of St. John's gospel. Why then should we imagine that there is any such thing in the introduction? If St. John's gospel is not written against Heretics, why should the beginning of it be so?" But a passage has already been produced from the latter part of this gospel (ch. xxi. 30, 31.) in which there is an evident reference to the very Heretics, against whom, as we contend, the introductory part was directed; and in which the Apostle expressly declares, that he wrote for the very purpose of establishing the opposite faith. See upon this subject Michaelis's introductory Lectures to the holy Scriptures, §. 102, 103. where the learned Professor contends that it is the design of the *whole gospel* to prove the several positions to be maintained

not an intimate union of two natures in one person, but a mere junction of two distinct Beings, retaining two distinct natures.

All sober Christians, who are seriously concerned for the honour of God and the successful propagation of his true religion, however in other respects their sentiments may differ, cannot but condemn opinions so monstrous and repugnant to the truth, and be ready, as opportunity shall offer, to bear their testimony against them. But we should observe, that the different denominations of Christians, though all joining in opposition to such extravagancies as these,

maintained against Cerinthus, which in the first eighteen verses are particularly distinguished and enumerated.

Another objection urged by Dr. Lardner (the first indeed in point of order) is also removed by the positive evidence, which the passage above referred to, affords: not to mention that it is in itself so weak as hardly to require an answer. It is as follows: "To me it seems below an evangelist to write against Heretics in the history of his Lord and Master." What! is it below an Evangelist to provide an antidote against the poison of heretical doctrines? St. Luke expressly declares that he was induced to write his gospel, in order that amidst the many, perhaps erroneous and not well-authenticated, accounts of Christ, which were abroad in the world, his Catechumen might have an accurate history, on which he might depend with certainty. Surely then St. John might justly undertake a history of his Master, for the express purpose of propounding the true faith in opposition to the false opinions respecting Christ, which then actually prevailed, and were perhaps daily gaining ground; especially considering that these opinions referred principally to historical points, and might therefore with singular propriety be opposed by an historical narrative.

would nevertheless be led by their respective principles to oppose them, each in a manner peculiar to itself: the Unitarian sect after one manner; the Arian after another; and those, who are called Orthodox, after a manner different from either. And this observation leads us to the mode, by which I propose to ascertain what support the unitarian doctrine is entitled to from the authority of one at least of the Apostles — of him, whose gospel was confessedly written against the Gnostic heresy. For if the manner, in which St. John conducted his opposition to this heresy, shall upon examination appear to be such as the principles of an Unitarian would naturally lead him to adopt, then undoubtedly it may, not without reason, be suspected, that he was himself an Unitarian: if on the other hand he combats the Gnostic errors after a manner inconsistent with the distinguishing Unitarian doctrines, we may with the utmost confidence assert, that these doctrines made no part of his belief. And thus are we furnished with a test, a reasonable and a decisive one, as far as I can judge, of St. John's sentiments: the introduction to whose gospel I shall proceed to examine with a view to the circumstance now under consideration, and from the manner in which he opposes the errors of the Gnostics, shall endeavour to determine, whether, as is pretended, he really held and taught the modern Unitarian doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ.

The Unitarians themselves admit, that the antient Gnostics, extravagant and absurd as their tenets are, nevertheless intended to do honour to Christ.* They could not, it seems, but think that mere humanity was incompatible with the dignified character of him, who was sent to reveal the unknown God, and who wrought so many miracles in confirmation of his divine mission. And on this account it was that even those among them, who allowed him to have a real human body, made it the mere receptacle or habitation of a celestial spirit, by whom in reality the revelation was made, and the miracles performed. Under the influence of these sentiments, an Unitarian would naturally begin his opposition to the Gnostic system, by declaring that the foundation upon which the whole was built, viz. the progeny of Æons, with which the heretics had stocked their Pleroma, was a mere fiction: that *Nous*, *Logos*, and all the other pretended emanations from the supreme God, were in reality nothing but so many attributes of the divine nature, and therefore not to be distinguished from God himself: that it was the

* "All the Heretics of this class, whose philosophy was more properly that of the East, thought it was *unworthy of so exalted a person as the proper Christ to be truly a Man.*" Hist. of Cor. vol. 1. p. 27.

"Ideas no better than these gave rise to the doctrine of the Gnostics; for they *meant to do honour to Christ.*" Hist. of early Opin. vol. 4. p. 11.

supreme God, who by the exertion of his own creative power, without any assistant or intermediate agent, at first made the world, and has ever since continued to uphold it by his providential care: that this same God in times past spake unto mankind by Moses and the Prophets, and had in these last days sent into the world a teacher greater than they, even Jesus Christ: that this illustrious messenger was, as to his nature, purely and simply a Man, born like other Men, only excelling all others, in wisdom and goodness: that during the whole of his ministry he spake and acted, not as of himself, but merely as the messenger of God; the doctrines which he taught, he delivered in the name of God, and the miracles which he wrought, he performed by the power of God: that these circumstances are evidently inconsistent with any other notion than that of simple humanity; since they prove most incontestably that he was possessed of no power, peculiarly his own, more than other Men have, and consequently that his nature cannot with any propriety be affirmed to be superior to that of Man.

In some such manner as this would an Unitarian naturally be led to combat the errors of the Gnostic heresy. Let us now enquire what are the doctrines which St. John advances in opposition to the same errors: from whence, if I mistake not, we shall have abundant reason to conclude

conclude that he was not, could not be, an Unitarian.

The light in which we are at present considering St. John's gospel, brings immediately to our view one circumstance, which cannot but strike us very forcibly; viz. that the Apostle adopts many of the expressions which the Gnostics had introduced into their system, such as in particular, *Λόγος*, *Ζών*, *Μονογενής*, *Ἀληθεύς*, *Χρῆς*, and applies them not as the Heretics did, each to a distinct character, but all of them to one, even to him, by whom the world was originally made, and who was afterwards manifested to be its light and Saviour. And first, applying to this divine personage the term *Λόγος*, he declares what, and where he was, before his manifestation to the world. He asserts that when all things began to be, the *Logos* then was, and was therefore himself without beginning: that as to the place of his existence, he was with God, subsisting in the divine nature, and was therefore, not an emanation from the Deity, but himself truly and properly God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." He next proceeds to shew that the visible world was created, not by a Being at an infinite distance from God, and entirely ignorant of him, but by the *Logos* himself. "All things were made by him; and without him

“him was not any thing made that was made.” The Apostle next asserts that this Creator of the world stands in another relation to it, as its enlightener and conductor to a blessed immortality; and in asserting this relation, he applies to him the name of another of the Gnostic Æons, *Zōn* or *Life*. “In him was *life*, and the *life* was “the light of Men.” But mankind, as he goes on to shew, sunk in ignorance and error, were insensible of the blessing which was intended them. “The light shineth in darkness, and the “darkness comprehended it not.” This ignorance of the true light is presently after again insisted upon. “That was the true light, which “lighteth every man that cometh into the “world. He was in the world, and the world “was made by him, and the world knew him “not. He came unto his own, and his own “received him not.” By the expression “his “own” Commentators in general understand the people of the Jews, to whom the Saviour bore a peculiar relation, and to whom, as we elsewhere read, he was more particularly sent.”

“By the expression “his own” Irenæus understands, not the people of the Jews, but the *world* in general, of which he had just before declared the *Logos* to be the Maker. The argument is much the same in which ever sense we take the words. If we take them in this latter sense, the Apostle will be understood to refer to that opinion of the Gnostics, which ascribes the creation of the World to some Power greatly inferior to, and cut off from all connection with, the supreme Being. “*Abstulit autem a nobis dissentiones*

omnes

The passage before us, understood in this sense, bears an evident allusion to the Gnostic doctrine respecting the Jewish nation, destroying, if not in express terms, at least by clear inference, that impious notion of theirs, which makes the God of the Jews an evil Being, the abolition of whose empire was the principal object of Christ's mission. For had this people been under the dominion of such a God as the Heretics supposed, there could not have subsisted between them and the divine Word any relation, at all similar to that which the Apostle here insists upon: "for what communion hath light with darkness?" and the divine Word in being manifested to them would have come, not unto his own, but to another's. When therefore we read "that he came unto his own," we are at the same time in effect assured, that God, who made all things by his word, and who by the same word revealed himself to the Jews, was in a peculiar manner their God, and they his people.

The Apostle, having thus stated the rejection of the true light both by the world in general, and also by God's peculiar people, proceeds to describe the blessedness of all, of whatever na-

"omnes ipse Joannes, dicens: *In hoc mundo erat, et mundus per ipsum factus est, et mundus eum non cognovit. In sua propria venit, et sui eum non receperunt. Secundum autem Marcionem et eos qui similes sunt ei, neque manus per eum factus est; neque in sua venit, sed in aliena.*" Lib. 3. c. 11. p. 218.

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tion or country, who do not imitate this sad example of ignorance and unbelief; declaring them invested with the privilege of belonging to the family of God; to which high dignity they are admitted, not by the bloody rite of circumcision, nor by carnal descent, nor by the adoption of Man, but by the adoption of God himself, whose good pleasure it is to receive as his Sons all who believe in Jesus Christ. For “as many
 “as received him to them gave he power, to
 “become the Sons of God, even to them
 “that believe on his name; which were born,
 “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh,
 “nor of the will of Man, but of God.”

In the next verse, in the course of which are applied to Christ the names of no less than three Æons in the Gnostic system, viz. *Μονογενής*, *Χαρίς*, *Αληθεα*, the Apostle proceeds to declare the manner in which the divine *Logos* was manifested to the world: “and the Word was
 “made flesh, and dwelt among us.” That Word, who was in the beginning, who was with God, who was God, and by whom all things were made, that same Word condescended to assume our mortal nature: not, as the Gnostics asserted of their Æon Christ, to join himself to a Man, but himself to become Man^p:

p “Secundum autem nullam sententiam hæreticorum, Verbum
 “Dei caro factum est. Si enim quis regulas ipsorum omnium
 “persecraretur, inveniet quoniam sine carne et impassibilis ab om-
 “nibus illis inducitur Dei Verbum, et qui est in superioribus
 “Christus.

he was made flesh, and dwelt among us, — *ἐσ-
κηνοῦντο ἐν ἡμῖν* — he pitched his tabernacle among
us; ¹ and as from the tabernacle of old, so from
this fleshly tabernacle, his body, a glory shone,
loudly proclaiming the divine presence, and
clearly manifesting to every beholder that he
was the true *Μονογενής*, the *Only-begotten* of the
supreme Father, sent into the world to reveal the
mercies, and to confirm the promises of God to
Man. “And the word was made flesh, and
“dwelt among us; (and we beheld his *glory*,
“the glory as of the *only-begotten* of the Fa-
“ther) full of *grace* and *truth*.”

From the foregoing view of the Apostle's
doctrine, it is evident that he combined in the
person of him, who was made flesh, and dwelt
among us, whatever the earlier Gnostics attri-
buted to the various divinities included in their
genealogies. In him the whole *Pleroma* is con-
tained: He is *Μονογενής*, *Λόγος*, *Ζωή*, *Χάρις*, *Αλή-*

“Christus. Alii enim putant manifestatum eum, quemadmodum
“hominem transfiguratum; neque autem natum, neque incarna-
“tum dicunt illum: alii vero neque figuram eum assumpsisse ho-
“minis; sed quemadmodum columbam descendisse in eum Je-
“sum, qui natus est ex Maria. Omnes igitur illos falsos testes
“ostendens discipulus Domini, ait. *Et Verbum caro factum est, et*
“*habitavit in nobis.*” Iren. lib. 3. c. 11. p. 219.

¹ See Wetstein in loc. — Perhaps the words may more properly
be rendered, “he pitched his tabernacle *in us*,” that is, in our
nature. — See Bp. Beveridge's Sermons, vol. 1. pag. 234. 161.

“In him dwelleth all the *fullness* of the Godhead *bodily* —
“*πάν το ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑ τῆς Θεότητος Σωματικῶς.*” Col. 2. 9. — And
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Sua. He is moreover the Creator, the Enlightener, the Saviour of the world: and all who believe in him, he consecrates the Sons of God, and raises to the hope of immortal life.

You are probably anticipating the conclusion which so exalted a description authorizes us to draw, and are ready to enquire, how names and offices, which so strongly indicate divinity, can possibly be attributed to a mere Man. Let the Unitarian see to that, and reconcile, if he can, things apparently so much at variance.

Permit me briefly to recapitulate the whole of the argument. It has been my object to shew, that the doctrines which St. John in the introduction to his gospel advances in opposition to the Gnostics in general, and to Cerinthus in particular, are absolutely inconsistent with the distinguishing tenets of the Unitarians. According to Cerinthus, our blessed Saviour consisted of two distinct parts, a Man, and a celestial Being residing in him. The doctrine of the Unitarians and that of St. John, both run counter to this division of the Lord, as Irenæus expresses it, but in different directions. The Unitarians are of opinion that he was a mere Man; St. John expressly asserts that he was the eternal Word of God, himself truly and properly God, appearing in our nature. According to the

of his *Fullness* — *α τὸ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΟΣ αὐτοῦ* — have we all received. John 1. 16.

former,

former, the Heretics represented the Saviour in too exalted a character; according to the latter, they debased him too much. The conclusion evidently is, that St. John was not an Unitarian. And thus is Unitarianism deprived of that firm support, which it boasts to derive from Apostolical authority. And together with this, it must lose that other support which it assumes to itself from the belief of the first Christians. For if the faith of St. John was not Unitarian, then neither was that of the Asiatic Churches, over which he presided: and since the history of these early ages is silent as to any difference of opinion, in a point so very essential, between the Churches of Asia and the other Churches of Christendom, it is fair to conclude that there was no such difference, and consequently that Unitarianism was not, generally speaking, the faith of the primitive Church.

What has now been advanced is, I trust, of itself sufficient to shew, that the Christian Church has not received upon slight grounds the doctrines of the pre-existence and divinity of Christ; and may therefore tend to confirm our own faith, however it may fail of convincing those, who do not believe as we do. Indeed little good of this latter kind is to be expected from the most cogent arguments which can now be produced, when we consider, how powerfully a violent prepossession in favour of the opposite doctrines has withstood

withstood that strong and seemingly irresistible evidence, which has been already accumulated by the learned and pious labours of some of the most distinguished characters of our Church and Nation.

But while we lament the blindness of those whose eyes are shut against the light, let us not forget the benefit which we ourselves derive from their errors. Whatever happens in this world, whether by the direction or by the permission of Providence, does not happen in vain. The very differences of opinion, which have in all ages so miserably disturbed the peace of the Church, if considered with respect to the present state of man, are useful, and even necessary. "There *must* be heresies among you," says the Apostle, "that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." This present life is a state of discipline and trial: it comprehends not the whole of our existence; but is merely preparatory to another and more durable state, in which we shall be rewarded or punished, according as we have employed the intellectual as well as moral faculties, which God hath given us. Without a trial, neither the constancy of our virtue, nor the firmness of our faith, could be made manifest: and therefore in each respect we have temptations to resist, and dangers to overcome. The world, the flesh, and the devil assault our virtue; the enticing words of man's wisdom

wisdom endanger our faith. And since those only, who abide in the doctrine of Christ, are approved of God, it is our duty, notwithstanding all opposition, to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. And “ blessed is
 “ the Man who *thus* endureth temptation : for
 “ when he is tried, he shall receive the crown
 “ of life, which the Lord hath promised to
 “ them that love him.”

5 Jam. 1. 12

T H E E N D.

Count Anthony
Henderson
Memoirs of the
Count & - Garrison
Cardenas & Rodriguez
Memoirs